# Advanced Political Analysis

**Course Convenor:** Dr James Wood

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**Office:** T3, Trinity Hall, Cambridge CB2 1TJ

**Office Hours:** Email to arrange an appointment.

**Teaching Pattern:** Wednesdays, 3:00pm to 5:00pm (starting 27th January 2021).

**Module Outline**

This module is focused on the question of what is entailed in taking a ‘scientific approach’ to the study of Politics and International Relations. This module aims to develop the research skills of students by teaching them to reflect critically on the different forms of political analysis, as well as the methods that inform this analysis, which ultimately cannot be separated from contestable assumptions about ontology (the nature of political reality) and epistemology (the knowledge that one can have about this reality). From this basis, we examine key meta-theoretical issues, such as structure and agency, the ideational and material, as well as conceptions of power, all of which are central to providing a robust conceptual framework to undertake research in Politics and International Relations. The main objective of this module is to enable students to reflect critically on their approach to their MPhil research in a reflexive and informed manner, which provides a platform for those interested in developing their research further, especially those looking to pursue a PhD.

**Learning Outcomes**

Upon successfully completing this module, students will be able to:

* Demonstrate an understanding of debates about ontology and epistemology in the social sciences, as relevant for studying Politics and International Relations;
* Demonstrate this understanding with reference to at least one ontological dimension (e.g. agency and structure, the nature of power);
* Locate their emerging research questions within the broader debates about ontology and epistemology and begin to work out the methodological implications for their MPhil research;
* Relate specific theoretical positions to particular methodological practices;
* Analyse and critically interpret written materials relating to Politics and International Relations;
* Interpret and critically assess theoretical arguments.

**Course Structure**

The course will consist of seven weekly two-hour seminars. Students will be expected to have completed the required readings in advance of each seminar. The purpose of the seminars is to have a student-led discussion of the assigned readings each week, which will be oriented around the set question listed in this guide. A discussion of the readings is only possible if students have prepared appropriately by doing the required reading. Student participation in the seminar discussion, though not formally assessed, is an essential part of your academic performance. Seminar participation is the principal opportunity for students to receive feedback on their understanding of the readings, which will be used to answer questions in the formal assessment. Therefore, prepare well for each seminar and be as active as possible. Seminars also provide spaces where you can raise questions or lines of debate with your peers and the module convenor, so make the most of them. **Seminar attendance and presentations are mandatory. A failure to meet these obligations may be regarded as lack of due industry.** If for any reason you cannot make a seminar, be sure to contact the module convenor in advance.

**Evaluation**

There is only one formal assessment for the module and this consists of a 3000 word essay. The submission date will be **19th March 2021**. Each student will also give a class presentation as part of a group, and the presentation questions are the same as the set seminar question pertaining to each topic.

**Readings**

Readings are divided into two categories: *required* and *recommended*. Required readings should be analysed by all students prior to each seminar, whilst the recommended readings provide additional material that should be covered in presentations and essays. Below are some of the most important texts for the course.

**Key Texts**

Hay, C. 2002. Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction. Palgrave.

Dowding, K. 2015. The Philosophy and Methods of Political Science. Palgrave.

**General Readings**

Goodin. R. E. 2010. The Oxford Handbook of Political Science. Oxford: OUP.

Marsh, D. & Stoker, J. 2010. Theory and Methods in Political Science. Palgrave.

Smith, S., Booth, K. & Zalewski, M. 1996. International Theory: Positivism and Beyond. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

**Seminar Schedule**

Seminar 1: Ontology, Epistemology, and Methodological Implications

Seminar 2: Defining and Debating ‘The Political’: Implications for Research

Seminar 3: Identifying Causal Mechanisms & Producing Causal Explanations

Seminar 4: From Structure and Agency to Strategy and Strategic Contexts

Seminar 5: The Role of Ideas in Politics and International Relations

Seminar 6: Conceptualising Power: From Pluralism to Post-Structuralism

Seminar 7: Temporality in Politics and International Relations

**Topics and Readings:**

**Seminar 1: Ontology, Epistemology, and Methodological Implications**

This session introduces students to the key concepts of ontology, epistemology and methodology, as well as their relevance to the analysis of Politics and International Relations. Students will consider the relationship between these concepts and how they are considered by different approaches to political analysis.

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**Seminar Question:**

To what extent may political analysis be considered a ‘scientific’ enterprise?

**Required Readings (Total Pages: 70):**

1. Wight, C. 2002. Philosophy of Social Science and International Relations,’ in Carlsnaes, W., Risse, T. & Simmons, B. (eds.) Handbook of International Relations, pp. 23-51.
2. Hay, C. 2011. Political Ontology, in R. E. Goodin (ed.) The Oxford Handbook of Political Science. Oxford: Oxford University Press. pp. 460-475.
3. Furlong, P. & Marsh, D. 2007. A Skin, Not a Sweater: Ontology and Epistemology in Political Science, in David Marsh & Gerry Stoker (eds.) Theory and Methods in Political Science 3rd edition, pp. 184-211.

**Recommended Reading:**

Alcoff, L. and Potter, R. 1993. Feminist Epistemologies. London: Routledge.

Ashley R. & Walker, R. B. J. 1990. Speaking the Language of Exile: Dissident Thought in International Studies, International Studies Quarterly, 34,259-268.

Benton, T. and Craib, I. 2001. Philosophy of Social Science: The Philosophical Foundations of Social Thought. Basingstoke: Palgrave.

Bhaskar, R. 1979. The Possibility of Naturalism. Hemel Hempstead: Harvester-Wheatsheaf.

Cox, R. W. 1981. Social Forces, States and World Order: Beyond International Relations Theory, Millennium: Journal of International Studies, 10, 126-155.

King, G., Keohane, R. & Verba, S. 1994. Designing Social Inquiry, Princeton, Princeton University Press.

Kuhn, T.S. 1970. The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Lakatos, I. and Musgrave, A. 1970. Criticism and the Growth of Knowledge. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Popper, K. 1959. The Logic of Scientific Discovery. London: Hutchinson.

Sayer, A. 2000. Realism and Social Science. London: Sage.

Vasquez, J. 1996. The Post-Positivist Debate: Reconstructing Scientific Enquiry in International Relations Theory after Enlightenment’s Fall, in Booth, K. & Smith, S. (eds.) International Relations Theory Today, pp. 217-240.

**Seminar 2: Defining and Debating ‘The Political’: Implications for Research**

What it is possible to know about an object is contingent on the nature of that object. Subsequently, debates regarding appropriate methodological choices are based on what social scientists consider to be their object of concern. However, defining what politics is as an ontological object is not a simple endeavor, which has significant implications regarding methodological concerns. This session provides students with the necessary toolkit to address these issues as they pertain to their own research.

**Seminar Question:**

What constitutes as politics and how should we undertake political analysis?

**Required Readings (Total Pages: 68):**

1. Dowding, K. 2015. The Philosophy and Methods of Political Science. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. Chapters 5 (102-132) and 10 (243-252).
2. Hay, C. 2002. Political Analysis. Basingstoke, Palgrave. Chapter 2 (59-88).

**Recommended Readings:**

Cohen, B. 2008. International Political Economy: An Intellectual History. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

Elshtain, J. B. 1981. Public Man, Private Woman: Women in Social and Political Thought. Princeton, Princeton University Press.

Hay, C. and Marsh, D. 1999. Putting the “P” Back into IPE, New Political Economy, 4, 5-22

Held, D. 1991. Political Theory Today. Cambridge: Polity.

Heywood, A. 1994. Political Ideas and Concepts. London: Macmillan.

Hirschmann, N. J. and Di Stefano, C. 1996. Revisioning the Political: Feminist Reconstructions of Traditional Concepts in Western Political Theory. Boulder: Westview.

Jessop, B. & Sum N.-L. 2001. Pre-disciplinary and Post-disciplinary Perspectives, New Political Economy, 6, 89-101.

Leftwich, A. 2004. What is Politics?: The Activity and its Study. London, Wiley.

Pateman, C. 1989. The Disorder of Women. Stanford, Stanford University Press.

Phillips, N. & Weaver, C. 2011. International Political Economy: Debating the Past, Present and Future, London: Routledge.

Ryner, M. 2012. Orthodoxy, Heterodoxy and the Production of Knowledge about the EU, Millennium: Journal of International Studies, 40, 647-673.

Smith, S. 1996. Positivism and beyond. in Smith, S., Booth, K., and Zalewski, M. (eds) International Theory: Positivism and Beyond. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Steinberger, P. J. 1999. Public and Private, Political Studies, 47, 292-313.

Wolf, E. R. 2010. Europe and the People Without History. Berkley, University of California Press.

**Seminar 3: Identifying Causal Mechanisms & Producing Causal Explanations**

Trying to establish causality is a central issue in analyses of Politics and International Relations, yet doing so is fraught with complications that relate to the different methods and ontological positions of various schools of thought. Although we might be able to demonstrate that X causes Y, there are questions as to whether establishing causation is sufficient for explaining or understanding an observed outcome. This session will explore differences between explanation and understanding as understood in analyses of Politics and International Relations. The aim of this session is to provide students with the necessary tools to convincingly support the claims of their research.

**Seminar Question:**

What is the difference between explanation and understanding and which should we seek as researchers?

**Required Readings (Total Pages: 84):**

1. Dowding, K. 2015. The Philosophy and Methods of Political Science. Basingstoke: Palgrave (chapters 3 (36-67) and 6 (133-159))
2. Kurki, M. 2006. Causes of a divided discipline: rethinking the concept of cause in International Relations theory’, Review of International Studies, 32, 189-216.

**Recommended Readings:**

Brady, H. E. 2010. Causation and Explanation in Social Science. in R. E. Goodin (ed.) The Oxford Handbook of Political Science. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bunge, M. 1997. Mechanism and explanation. Philosophy of the Social Sciences, 27, 410-465.

Ermakoff, I. 2019. Causality and History: Modes of Causal Investigation in Historical Social Sciences. Annual Review of Sociology, 45, 581-606

Falleti, T. G. & Lynch, J. F. 2009. Context and Causal Mechanisms in Political Analysis. Comparative Political Studies, 42, 1143-1166.

Gerring, J. 2010. Causal Mechanisms: Yes, But…’, Comparative Political Studies, 43, 1499–1526.

Lewis, P. A. 2002. Agency, Structure and Causality in Political Science: A Comment on Sibeon. Politics, 22(1), 17–23.

Morgan, S. L., & Winship, C. 2007. Counterfactuals and causal inference: Methods and principles for social research. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Parsons, C. 2007. How to Map Arguments in Political Science. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Pierson, P. 1993. When Effects Become Cause: Policy Feedback and Political Change, World Politics, 45, 595-628.

Tilly, C. 2001. Mechanisms in Political Processes. Annual Review of Political Science, 4, 21-41

Trampusch, C. & Palier, B. 2016. Between X and Y: how process tracing contributes to opening the black box of causality, New Political Economy, 21:5, 437-454

**Seminar 4: From Structure and Agency to Strategy and Strategic Contexts**

This session focuses on the structure and agency debate, which is central to analyses of Politics and International Relations. The debate asks: are political actors are ‘masters’ of their destiny or are their actions determined by the structures in which they are embedded? This is further complicated by non-reductive attempts to answer this question based on the interactive relationship between structure and agency. Resolving this problem is far from straightforward, as it involves complex questions of psychoanalysis and linguistics and whether these are, or are not, key for understanding issues in Politics and International Relations.

**Seminar Question:**

‘Men (sic) make history but not as they please’. This quote from Marx is often used to frame the debate about the ‘agency-structure problem’, but it can be interpreted in different ways. Critically evaluate the main interpretations and the ‘solutions’ offered to the ‘problem’.

**Required Readings (Total Pages: 77):**

1. Hay, C. 2002. Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction. (Chapter 3 pp. 89-134).
2. Hay, C. 2009. King Canute and the Problem of Structure and Agency: On Time, Tides and Heresthetics’, Political Studies, 57, 260-79.
3. Jessop, B. 2005. Critical Realism and the Strategic-Relational Approach. New Formations, 56, 40-53.

**Recommended Reading:**

Archer, M. 1998. Social Theory and the Analysis of Society’, in May, T. & Williams, M. (eds.) Knowing the Social World. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Bieler, A. & Morton, A. D. 2001. The Gordian Knot of Agency-Structure in International Relations: A Neo-Gramscian Perspective, European Journal of International Relations, 7, pp. 3-35.

Giddens, A. 1979. Central Problems of Social Theory. London: Macmillan

Hay, C. 2010. ‘Structure and Agency’, in D. Marsh and G. Stoker (eds.) Theory and Methods in Political Science. London: Macmillan.

Hollis, M. & Smith, S. 1991. Beware of Gurus: Structure and Agency in International Relations, Review of International Studies, 17, 393-410.

Jessop, B. 1999. Interpretative Sociology and the Dialectic of Structure and Agency, Theory, Culture and Society, 13, 119-128.

Sayer, A. 1992. Method in Social Science: A Realist Approach. London, Routledge.

Wendt, A. 1987. The Agent/Structure Problem in International Relations’, International Organisation, 41, 335-370.

Wharton, A.S. 1991. Structure and Agency in Socialist-Feminist Theory, Gender and Society, 5, 373-389.

Wright, C. 1999. They Shoot Horses Dead Don’t They? Locating Agency in The Agency- Structure Problematique’, European Journal of International Relations, 5, 109-42.

**Seminar 5: The Role of Ideas in Politics and International Relations**

Whilst the last session examined the relationship between structures and agents, this session deals with the related question of how the ideas that actors hold about the social world relate to that world itself. Can we really rule out the possibility that subjects (as positivist, and, ultimately, extreme structuralists do) do not in part ‘construct’ the world since their ideational understanding shape their actions and hence the outcome? This brings us to the study of ‘ideology’ and ‘discourse’ to examine the links between the ideational and the material.

**Seminar Question:**

What are ‘ideas’ in Politics and International Relations, and how should they be studied?

**Required Readings (Total Pages: 49):**

1. Hay, C. 2002. Political Analysis, Palgrave. (Chapter 6, pp. 194-215).
2. Blyth, M. 2003. Structures do not come with an Instruction Sheet: Interests, Ideas, and Progress in Political Science, Perspectives on Politics, 1, 695-706.
3. Finlayson, A. 2007. From Beliefs to Arguments: Interpretive Methodology and Rhetorical Political Analysis, The British Journal of Politics & International Relations, 9, 545-563.

**Recommended Reading:**

Adler, E. 1997. Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics’, European Journal of International Relations, 3, 319-36.

Béland, D. & Cox, R. H. 2010. Ideas and Politics in Social Science Research. Oxford, Oxford University Press. pp. 3-20.

Bieler, A. 2001. Questioning Cognitivism and Constructivism in IR Theory: Reflections on the Material Structure of Ideas, Politics, 21, 93-101.

Carstensen, M. B. 2015. Conceptualising Ideational Novelty. The British Journal of Politics & International Relations, 17: 284-297

Eagleton, T. 1991. Ideology: An Introduction, London, Longman.

Goldstein, J. & Keohane, R. 1993. Ideas and Foreign Policy: Beliefs, Institutions and Political Change. London, Cornell University Press.

Hay, C. 1996. Narrating Crisis: The Discursive Construction of the Winter of Discontent, Sociology, 30, 253-77.

Howarth, D. & Torfing, J. 2004. Discourse Theory in European Politics Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hunt, A. and Purvis, T. 1993. Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology, Discourse, Ideology.., British Journal of Sociology, 44, 473-99.

Laffey, M. and Weldes, J. 1997. Beyond Belief: Ideas and Symbolic Technologies in the Study of International Relations, European Journal of International Relations, 3 (2), 193-237.

Schmidt, V. A. 2008. Discursive Institutionalism: The Explanatory Power of Ideas and Discourse. Annual Review of Political Science, 11, 303-326

**Seminar 6: Conceptualising Power: From Pluralism to Post-Structuralism**

This session builds on the previous topics of structure-agency and the ideational-material to focus on power. Although power is arguably the key concern of Politics and International Relations, it is far from a straightforward phenomenon. Nailing down a concrete definition is highly challenging; some treat the concept as an *a priori* given; others consider it to have several ‘faces’; Foucauldian’s believe power is everywhere; whilst more extreme post-structuralists argue that it does not exist at all. These debates are not merely analytical: understandings of power have implications for our conceptions of emancipation and freedom and whether they are achievable or even desirable. In other words, the stakes when conceptualising power are hardly trivial.

**Seminar Question:**

To what extent does reducing explanations to ‘power’ offer a convincing account of phenomena in Politics and International Relations?

**Required Readings (Total Pages: 73):**

1. Hay, C. 2002. Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction. (Chapter 5). 168-193
2. Foucault, M. 1979. The History of Sexuality: Volume 1 – The Will to Knowledge. London, Penguin. pp. 92-102.
3. Baudrillard, J. 2007. Forget Foucault. Los Angeles, Semiotext(e). pp. 29-67

**Recommended Reading:**

Bevir, M. 1999. Foucault, Power and Institutions, Political Studies, 47, 345-359.

Bachrach, P. & Baratz, M. S. 1962. Two Faces of Power, American Political Science Review, 56, 947-952.

Barrett, M. 1992. The Politics of Truth: From Marx to Foucault. Cambridge: Polity.

Carstensen, M. & Schmidt, V. 2016. Power through, over and in ideas: conceptualizing ideational power in discursive institutionalism. Journal of European Public Policy, 23, 318-337.

Dahl, R. 1957. ‘The Concept of Power,’ Behavioural Science, 2, 201-205.

Foucault, M. 1965. Discipline and Punish. London: Tavistock.

Fraser, N. 1989. Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory. Cambridge: Polity.

Gill, S. 2003. Power and Resistance in the New World Order, Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.

Issac, J.C. 1987. Power and Marxist Theory: A Realist View. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

Jessop, B. 2016. The State: Past, Present, Future. Cambridge, Polity.

Lukes, S. 2005. Power: A Radical View. Basingstoke, Palgrave Macmillan.

Outhwaite, W. 1994. Habermas: A Critical Introduction. Cambridge: Polity.

Poulantzas, N. 2014. State, Power, Socialism. London, Verso.

Strange, S. 2015. States and Markets, London, Bloomsbury.

**Seminar 7: Temporality in Politics and International Relations**

Analyses of Politics and International Relations often ignore time an important dimension of social reality, where, at best, it is often reduced to a secondary concern. Such analyses are frequently predicated on assumptions that time is evolutionary, reflecting an underlying ‘mechanism’ determining how history unfolds. This contrasts with traditional historians, who have tended to see time simply as a succession of events. Although these conceptions of time are not unimportant, this session suggests that the traditional views of time are excessively restrictive, and we consider a wider variety of ‘chronotypes’ that are relevant for the analysis of Politics and International Relations.

**Seminar Questions:**

To what extent is political change just one thing happening after another?

**Required Readings (Total Pages: 65):**

1. Hay, C. 2002. Political Analysis: A Critical Introduction. (Chapter 4) pp. 135-167
2. Tilly, C. 2006. Why and How History Matters, in R. E. Goodin and C. Tilly (eds.) The Oxford Handbook of Contextual Political Analysis. Oxford: Oxford University. pp. 417-434.
3. Foucault, M. 1989. The Archaeology of Knowledge. Routledge. pp. 3-19

**Recommended Reading:**

Boudon, R. 1986. Theories of Social Change: A Critical Appraisal. Cambridge: Polity.

Calvert, P. 1990. Revolution and Counter-Revolution. Milton Keynes: Open University Press.

Carr, E. H. 1990. What is History? Harmondsworth: Penguin.

Carstensen M.B & Matthijs M. 2018. Of paradigms and power: British economic policy making since Thatcher. Governance. 31, 431–447.

Cox, R. W. 1976. On Thinking About the Future of World Order, World Politics 28, 175-196.

Gill, S. 1993. Gramsci, historical materialism and international relations. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Hall, P. 1993. Policy Paradigms, Social Learning and the State: The Case of Economic Policy-Making in Britain’, Comparative Politics, 25 (3), 175-96.

Hay, C. 1996. Re-Stating Social and Political Change. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Jenkins, K. 1997. On ‘What is History’? London: Routledge.

Krasner, S. 1984. Approaches to the State: Alternative Conceptions and Historical Dynamics, Comparative Politics, 16, 223-246.

Kuhn, T.S. 1970. The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Marx, K. 1970. The German Ideology. London, Lawrence & Wishart.

Ruggie, J. G. 1986. Continuity and Transformation in the World Polity: Toward a Neorealist Synthesis, in Keohane, R. (ed.) Neorealism and its Critics.